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COLLECTIVE COVID HANGOVER

by Cara Hewett
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Cara Hewett, MA, has been in the field of psychology since the late 80s. Her experience includes in-patient psychiatric hospitals, mental health agencies, private psychotherapy practice, as well as teaching and counseling at the university level. Cara is trained in various therapeutic modalities including EMDR and hypnotherapy. Her understanding of behavior from a transpersonal perspective led to forming a mind, body, spirit center which offered classes and workshops in personal growth. Her passion continues today with further emphasis involving theoretical approaches in the field of psychology, metaphysics, neuroscience, and the study of human consciousness. Cara coauthored, with her colleague Tracy Zboril, "The Soul Happy Book: Reprogram Your Mind Using Groundbreaking Techniques Bridging Science and Spirituality."

It can safely be said that most of humanity is in the throes of a post-COVID-19 hangover. Symptoms of this hangover include confusion, uncertainties, insecurities, and general overall anxiety.

Unlike a few too many margarita hangovers, this one hasn't dissipated the next day. The head-spins, fogginess, and confusion are lasting several weeks, and according to many governmental experts, it may continue for many months. We have been longing to wake up feeling normal and stable again, to put our feet on the ground and feel secure. Wouldn't it be easy if we could lie down, take an aspirin and stop this perpetual wave of COVID chaos? Just take a pill and poof, all better, clarity, headache gone.

In fact, many of us are realizing that our notion of normalcy may need to be redefined. In many cases, our very lives may depend on it.

Collectively, our mental and emotional health is hanging in the balance. An untold reality is lurking in our pandemic wake. Mental health professionals are seeing a huge rise in suicides, addictions, and depression. This grim reality has taken a back-stage place among the stats being presented in the mainstream news. It's time to look at the emotional toll it is taking on all of us. Wouldn't it be great to have a blood test to determine post-COVID-19 mental and emotional instability?

Truth is, we have a long mask-wearing, 6-foot social distancing road ahead of us and the light at the end of that tunnel is blurry, to say the least. So, what is the answer now? Clearly, no one really knows.

The thing is, during this time, we have looked to authorities that seemingly know much about this virus to help us find the solutions to this global problem. It is now for all of us to see that governments and health officials are at a loss to know anything for certain. It is a scary reality and the unknown course of action has become debilitating and paralyzing for us. Our culture relies on others to make all things normal for us and lately things are not going our way. Ask anyone desperately looking for a roll of toilet paper.

We are so used to quick fixes that we don't even know what to do when solutions to our problems are unknown. More importantly, we have given our power over to those who "know better" to tell us how we must continue living. In fact, we have been programmed our whole lives to depend on others to give us advice.

Our ability to look within ourselves to find our own coping mechanisms is a foreign concept. This is the biggest wake-up call of all. Resiliency during this hangover is not some fluffy self-help advice, it's imperative for higher functioning, period

Years ago, in my own search for personal growth, I enrolled in Monroe Institute programs starting with Gateway Voyage residential program. This completely changed my personal as well as professional perspective on positive change. My Monroe experience inspired me to study to become an Outreach Trainer.

Ultimately, after years of practicing talk therapy, I concluded that what really needs to be taught is that instead of relying on others, such as a therapist, to provide wisdom and strength during trying times, simply teaching, then allowing for the gentle exploration of the self beyond the limitations of programmed beliefs is the best form of self-help. This realization could not be more potent considering the times in which we live.

Over the last few weeks, when I have sensed anxiety bubbling up within me, I have turned to the familiar and comforting voice of Bob Monroe in my many Monroe guided meditations.

As I am writing this, our country is in turmoil with overnight rioting. Fear is magnified in ways we could not have imagined just two months ago. This hangover just isn't going away. It's as though we just ponied up to the bar and pulled another all-nighter. Here we go again. It is time to go within now more than ever.

We have to understand that in order to maintain our sanity, we must create lives for ourselves that embrace these hangover side-effects.

We must find a new normal amidst all of this uncertainty and barrage of negativity, and it's not going to be easy. It takes a powerful will to create a new perspective of

emotional normalcy. It takes discipline and effort to change the narrative in our heads. Instead of the gloom and doom, we must try on a new default thought, one of acceptance of greater possibilities. Creativity and inspiration are powerful traits to find deep within the creases of seemingly desperate situations.

This is not the work of babies. It is going to require self-awareness, an understanding of the environment and attention to your own thoughts. The truth is in plain sight, there is no life-line, it's up to us to determine how to navigate these uncharted waters. This hangover will not last forever, we will come out of it. When we do, however, we must not have lost the sense of self-accomplishment we can have gained from digging deep and learning how to stay stable amidst the chaos.